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ARTICLES:

(1) Aso proposes a "redefinition" of the Japan-U.S. alliance in speech at Ocean symposium

Yomiuri Online (Full)  
March 6, 2008, 12:30

(Nagahara, Washington)

A symposium titled "The Japan-U.S. Sea Power Dialogue" started in Washington on the evening of March 5, local time, to discuss how Japan and the U.S. should cooperate in dealing with such ocean issues as vicious assaults by pirates, smuggling of weapons and drugs, as well as disputes between nations over vested interests. The symposium is held for three days under the co-sponsorship of the Ocean Policy Research Foundation and the Center for a New American Security, with the support of Yomiuri Shimbun).

Delivering a speech in the symposium, former Foreign Minister Taro Aso of the Liberal Democratic Party said: "We are in the era of increasing uncertainty in the ocean," citing disputes over vested interests. He then proposed that in order to properly deal with various marine problems, the two major sea powers in the Pacific Ocean - Japan and the U.S. - should "redefine" their alliance and aim at forming an "integrated sea power."

As specific measures to redefine the Japan-U.S. alliance, Aso suggested that the two countries should share their knowledge about marine science, natural resource development, and environmental protection, in addition to conventional cooperation on the military

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front, and also strengthen cooperation at the private-sector level. He also emphasized that Japan and the U.S. should take the lead in forming a cooperative structure that also includes such countries as India and Australia.

In the debate session, Michael Green, former senior director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council (NSC), referred to the temporary suspension of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, and stressed the need for Japan to make efforts to be able to continue its mission even after the new Antiterrorism Special Measures Law loses effect next January. Aso said: "It is Japan's responsibility to prevent the same thing from happening again."

(2) Government launches discussion on emissions-trading system under Kantei, with eye on G-8 Summit

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
March 6, 2008

The government called the first meeting of a council of experts tasked with discussing global warming at the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei) yesterday. In it, the government launched a discussion to chart a strategy to fight global warming under the Kantei in preparations for the Lake Toya Summit in Hokkaido (G-8 Summit), in which environmental issues will take center stage. The panel is expected to hold in-depth discussions on whether Japan should create an emissions-trading system, like the European Union (EU).

The government set up the council as an advisory panel to Prime Minister Fukuda to help him take the initiative in addressing the issue of global warming.

The panel is composed of 12 members, including representatives from the electricity and steel industries, both of which are major greenhouse gas emitters, and academics. Former Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) Chairman Hiroshi Okuda, senior advisor to Toyota Motor Corp., assumed the chairmanship by the recommendation of the prime minister. The appointment was based on the judgment that "Mr. Okuda has great influence in economic circles, which holds the key to promoting measures against global

warming," noted an official in the Kantei.

The panel is apparently aiming to draw attention from the public, in a sense, as shown by putting in Junko Edahiro, who translated An Inconvenient Truth, a book authored by former Vice President Al Gore.

In the first meeting, the prime minister said: "Since this is an issue that will affect the lifestyles of the people, I want you to conduct discussions in a way understandable to the public." High on the agenda in the panel are: (1) specific measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and (2) international cooperation to reduce worldwide gas emissions.

On whether to introduce an emissions-trading system, a tug-of-war is going on between the Environment Ministry, which is eager about the system, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which is calling for a cautious approach. In its next session in early April, the panel will intensively discuss this issue.

Chairman Okuda indicated in a press conference after the first

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meeting that Japan should set out a direction by the time of the G-8 Summit, citing the efforts being made by the EU and the U.S.

In the meeting, however, Nippon Steel Corp. President Akio Mimura said: "Forming a post-Kyoto framework (beyond the 2012 expiration of the protocol) should come first before discussion on an emissions-trading system," indicating a cautious view. The panel will also discuss the innovation of technologies to bring about a low carbon society as proposed by Prime Minister Fukuda in the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos in January. In the meeting yesterday, participants decided to establish a subcommittee to discuss the challenge of forming environmental model cities and a low-carbon society, with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by using such natural energy as sunlight and wind power.

Continued talks needed to reduce gas emissions

(Commentary)

The Kyoto Protocol obligates industrialized countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions during the 2008–2012 timeframe. However, the U.S., the world's largest emitter of global warming gases, is outside this framework. In addition, China is not required to reduce its gas emissions.

Unless a post-Kyoto framework involves all major gas emitters, it will be difficult to effectively contain global warming. It is now significant to set up a Lake Toya process and continue discussions.

A preparatory period is needed for each nation, so in order to introduce a new climate regime in 2013, the goal is to conclude an agreement by the end of 2009. The main stage for the negotiations will be the next session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. An annual COP session brings together the environment ministers of about 190 countries, so it is not easy to solicit agreement on any issues.

About 20 countries - such emerging countries as China and India, both of which are becoming major gas emitters, South Korea, Indonesia and other countries, besides the Group of Eight countries - have discharged about 80 PERCENT of total gas emissions across the world. Forming an agreement among them might be a shortcut to bringing about an agreement in the COP. Specific tasks will be discussed at the G-8 environment ministerial in May and other meetings. Japan's leadership will be tested in such meetings.

(3) Global warming greenhouse gas emissions cut according to industrial sector: Government to present to UN set of proposals for post-Kyoto Protocol framework

The government will submit as early as this week a set of proposals on talks to create a new framework for cutting global warming greenhouse gas emissions to be adopted starting in 2013, replacing the Kyoto Protocol. One proposal is to adopt, when working out a country-specific goal for greenhouse gas emissions cuts, a method of calculating amounts of global warming greenhouse gas emissions that each industrial sector, such as the steel and power industries, can cut and then add them up according to sector -- the so-called bottom-up method. It will also ask the UN to set up a taskforce to

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examine the proposed calculation method. The government will aim at securing leadership in post-Kyoto Protocol framework talks.

This proposal is the embodiment of a set of measures to combat climate change, which Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda revealed at the World Economic Forum (Davos Conference) in January. The government will present this proposal to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as early as this week. It wants to set the direction to a certain degree by gaining support from the G-8 participants in the July summit.

The showcase of the set of proposals Japan will make is the bottom-up method of working out a country-by-country goal of achieving greenhouse gas emissions cuts by totaling the emissions amount that can be achieved by each industrial sector.

Sector-specific goals would be set for about eight sectors and fields, including the large energy-consumer industry, such as chemical and cement industries, and the livelihood-connected sector, such as households and offices. The upper limit of emissions would be set with each sector's production volume and the degree of its introduction of energy-saving technology into consideration.

Since the Kyoto Protocol has mandated all industry sectors to uniformly cut carbon dioxide emissions, industrial circles were strongly discontent, noting that industries that are highly advanced in terms of energy conservation are disadvantageous, because room for additional cuts for them is small. Japan's proposal this time has given consideration for such opinion.

Regarding the new method, the government will seek the establishment of a subcommittee consisting of private-sector companies, such as utility companies, and experts of the International Energy Agency (IEA), under the post-Kyoto Protocol negotiations working group. The proposed panel would be responsible for working out a concrete method and schedule.

The government's proposals will also include moving the amount of global warming greenhouse gas emissions into the minus column over the next 10 to 20 years as well as to improve the world's energy efficiency by 30 PERCENT by 2020. In order to have developing countries cut greenhouse gas emissions, it will also propose categorizing developing countries into those that need assistance from industrialized countries and those that do not need such assistance. Another proposal is sharing a long-term goal of halving the world's greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and international cooperation for environmental technologies.

(4) Toying with nomination of BOJ governor an act of folly

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)  
March 6, 2008

By Naoaki Okabe, Nikkei executive editor

Under the divided Diet, Japan remains unable to determine who the next Bank of Japan governor will be. Governor Toshihiko Fukui's term of office expires in less than two weeks at a time when global financial markets are in turmoil. This unusual situation could undermine Japan's international credibility. The question of nominating the next BOJ governor must be resolved early by separating it from politics. Doing so is the responsibility of all lawmakers.

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What would happen if the post of the BOJ governor remains unfilled? With the deadline just around the corner, we are now forced to give serious thought to a worst-case scenario. The government first presents its personnel plan, then comes a hearing of views of the nominated governor and deputy governors, followed by votes in plenary sessions of both chambers of the Diet. A set of Diet procedures takes time.

Needless to say, vacancy in the governorship is not envisaged under the Bank of Japan Law (TN: sic). Although the law requires the executive directors to perform the governor's duties when the posts of the governor and deputy governors are vacant, views are split over the scope of duties to be performed by the executive directors, such as whether they are allowed to vote in policy board meetings.

Without the governor, the BOJ would become dysfunctional. We are especially concerned that the BOJ will be left out of the circle of international cooperation among central banks, which is increasingly important in dealing with the global financial crisis originated from the United States, and that the BOJ will become a drag on international efforts to overcome difficulties.

The United States might slip into recession due to a decline in consumer spending following the subprime crisis. Combined with soaring oil prices, its economy might even fall into stagflation.

Although such economies as China and India still remain strong, if the United States fails to stem the crisis, a chain of crises might expand.

Japan is the hardest hit by the world crisis combined with the weakening dollar. The Japanese stock market has exhibited the largest decline although the country's losses from the subprime mortgage have been small. Such results seem to reflect the serious political risks of Japan, which remains unable to determine the new BOJ governor.

It is certain that other countries find it difficult to understand the bickering over the appointment of the new BOJ governor. The Democratic Party of Japan is opposed to the government's personnel plan based on the argument that fiscal policy must be separated from monetary policy, which was prevalent in the era of the former Finance Ministry. The matter was settled with the establishment of the Financial Services Agency.

The independence of the central bank has significantly increased with the amended Bank of Japan Law. The law's Article 4 urges the BOJ to always maintain close contact with the government in order to keep its currency and monetary policy in harmony with the government's economic policy. The independence of currency and monetary policy goes hand in hand with cooperation with the government.

Successful candidates must have a comprehensive knowledge of the market with strong international credibility. Internationally, former senior Finance Ministry officials seem to fit the job. For instance, European Central Bank Governor Trichet of France was director of the Treasury Department and former Deutsche Bundesbank President Tietmeyer was a Finance Ministry official. In addition, U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Volcker was also a former Treasury Department bureaucrat.

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At this point, the ruling and opposition camps must return to the "starting point" and think hard about the significance of the central bank. Having the central bank that is independent and highly dependable is a basic requirement for any mature nation. A huge capital inflow into the United States beset with an enormous deficit owed much to international confidence in former FRB Chairman Greenspan. Deutsche Bundesbank worked so hard to bring stability to the value of currency that people said that anyone criticizing the bank would be criticized.

The central bank that is truly dependable is an invaluable national asset. Today, central banks are in a race of trustworthiness. Competitiveness also increases with attractiveness to overseas capital. Forging the trustworthiness of the central bank takes not only efforts by itself but also by all people, including lawmakers. Lawmakers are toying with the appointment of a new central bank governor, which is simply an act of folly.

(5) Editorial: Is that the way to protect nature by attacking a whaler?

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
March 5, 2008

Crew members of the Sea Shepherd, the ship of an anti-whaling group from America, threw bottles of chemicals from their vessel onto the Japanese whaling research ship Nisshin Maru in the Southern Ocean, injuring three crew members. Although the Japan Coast Guard has begun an investigation into the incident as a case of forcefully hindering the crews duties and inflicting bodily harm, the captain of the Sea Shepherd has said that the crew will continue its activities.

It goes without saying that used of force on the open sea is tantamount to terrorism and piracy. Both the Japanese government and the international community must not overlook such an inhumane act and should take effective measures. The government should not just file a pro forma protest and express its displeasure.

The incident involves the question of the international legal order and the safety of human lives. That should be resolved before discussing whether whaling should be allowed or not. We can never condone any act of violence regardless of the views behind them.

What is alarming is that these kinds of obstructionist groups often intend their performances in order to be provocative and appeal to their supporters. The environment group wants to turn the research ship's resistance and evasive action into an attack by the vessel on their members.

For example, Sea Shepherd members hurled bottles of chemicals into the whale research vessel Yushin Maru No. 2 and two activists who intruded into the Japanese ship were temporarily in custody there. The Sea Shepherd then claimed that the Japanese research vessel had taken the two members as hostages.

The JCG has maritime safety officials aboard the whale research ships for the purpose of grasp the situation by gathering information when research ships are attacked, as well as to preserve evidence. Such will be key to the investigation of this case.

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In order to prevent a recurrence, it is necessary to build a framework of international opposition to and criticism of such illegal activist groups. Without such an effort, there will be a repeat of escalating attacks by such organizations. Expressing strong anger toward the recent incident, the Japanese government urged Australia, which allows the Sea Shepherd vessel to visit its ports, and the Netherlands, which allows the vessel to use its nationality, to take tough response toward the Sea Shepherd's acts. Although the Australian government is a strong opponent of Japan's whaling program, its foreign minister released a statement, which said: "Australia strongly condemns actions by crew members of any vessel that cause injury to anyone on the high seas."

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) member countries have yet to reach a consensus (on the question of whether to permit scientific whaling). But no IWC member allows violent disturbances. Some anti-whaling countries, though, are believed to indirectly support anti-whaling organizations.

We stress that we are not criticizing the Sea Shepherd in order to deny the anti-whalers their arguments. We just can never condone even indirect support by any anti-whaling country for organizations that commit violence.

The Japanese government, too, needs to probe into its own argument in detail and make better efforts to have anti-whaling countries understand it. Needless to say, the onus is on Tokyo to make further efforts to reach a compromise solution, while listening to the views of the anti-whaling countries. The IWC annual convention will take place in early the summer in Chile. Japan will host the Group of Eight summit in July at the Lake Toya resort area in Hokkaido. Attention will be focused on Japan's views even more than ever.

(6) Okinawan people's rally to protest crimes committed by U.S. servicemen: Prefectural Assembly not to take part due to incomplete deliberations on petition by U.S. military bases committee

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 2) (Full)  
March 6, 2008

The U.S. Military Base-related Special Committee (chaired by Seiichi Oyakawa) of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly yesterday held a meeting and delivered a petition for holding an Okinawan people's rally to protest sexual assaults by U.S. servicemen. The panel stopped short of reaching a conclusion. It will once again hold a meeting to deliberate on the petition. The likelihood is, however, another deliberations will not be held before March 23, when the rally is slated to be held. The Prefectural Assembly will likely skipping the rally without holding another deliberations on the request.

Winding up the committee meeting, Oyakawa indicated his view that it would be impossible to hold another committee meeting, unless there are prospects for the request to be met with the ruling-party group becoming positive toward holding another deliberations before the 23rd.

The opposition party-related group during the meeting sought the adoption of the petition on the 5th, while the ruling-party group insisted that they would bring it back to their headquarters. For this reason, they agreed to hold another session for further deliberations. A schedule for another deliberations has been left to

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Oyakawa to work out. Another deliberation will likely be rescheduled for the week starting on the 17.

The situation is that it will be difficult to unify the views of the ruling-party group with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the largest group in the ruling camp, which finds it difficult to take part in the rally. Since many members of the Okinawan People's Conference are also cautious about the idea of taking part in the rally, it is unlikely for the ruling-party group to agree to comply with the request. In that event, a committee meeting itself will not be held before the rally. As a result, the petition will be shelved, and the Prefectural Assembly will give up on participation in the rally.

Governor Nakaima makes it a condition for the Prefectural Assembly to take part in the rally on a non-partisan basis. If the Prefectural Assembly cannot participate in the rally, the governor will also unlikely take part.

(7) Sex crime rate up 24 PERCENT in U.S. military, 2,947 incidents reported: Pentagon

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Full)  
March 6, 2008

Sumiyo Henna, Ryukyu Shimpo correspondent, Los Angeles

The rate of sexual crimes involving U.S. service members around the world in 2006 showed a sharp increase of 24 PERCENT over the preceding year, the U.S. Department of Defense noted in a recently released report. In 2006, there were 2,947 incidents (rapes and attempted rapes included), an increase of 573 from 2,374 in 2005. There was also an increase in the number of cases where victims have withdrawn their complaints as in the case of a recent junior high school girl rape in Okinawa. In 2006, there were 670 withdrawn

cases, a twofold increase of 327 over the preceding year.

The report was submitted by an undersecretary of defense to the Armed Services Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives in the U.S. Congress in March 2007. The Pentagon compiled sexual crime reports from the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. The Pentagon report shows no breakdown of incidents in and outside the United States.

In the United States, the problem surfaced with a number of complaints from women who had been sexually assaulted by U.S. servicemen after the Afghan war. The U.S. Congress urged the Pentagon to carry out a fact-finding survey of U.S. military personnel about sexual assaults. The Pentagon started in 2004 to collect sexual crime data in the U.S. military and is required to report the findings to Congress.

According to the Pentagon report, there were 1,700 sexual assault cases (excluding those withdrawn by victims) in 2004. There were 2,047 cases in 2005 and 2,277 cases in 2006.

In the breakdown of complaints filed in 2006, assailants and victims were U.S. service members in 1,167 cases (51 PERCENT). Assailants were U.S. service members and victims were civilians in 658 cases (29 PERCENT). Assailants were civilians and U.S. service members were victims in 82 cases (3.6 PERCENT). Victims were U.S. service members and assailants cannot be identified in 370 cases (16 PERCENT).

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Those reported incidents occurred at military installations in 1,208 cases (53 PERCENT) and outside military installations in 953 cases (42 PERCENT), with unidentified locations in 116 cases (5 PERCENT).

Among the 2,277 incidents that were reported in 2006, U.S. military investigative authorities have completed investigations on 1,500 persons in 1,402 cases (62 PERCENT). Of the 1,500 persons, U.S. military commanding officers could not directly punish 765 persons (51 PERCENT) because they were civilians or foreign nationals who are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMC).

Of the 735 persons subject to punitive action, 446 are pending. Among the 289 persons for punitive action, 72 were court-martialed, and 114 were punished. The U.S. media, however, is raising a question about the reliability of the Pentagon report on the number of punishments.

(8) Okinawa Human Rights Association protests series of crimes committed by U.S. military personnel

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 23) (Full)  
March 6, 2008

In the wake of a series of crimes committed by U.S. military members, including the alleged rape of a junior high school girl by a U.S. Marine, Seigen Nagayoshi, secretary general of the Okinawa Human Rights Association (headed by Hiroaki Fukuchi) and other officials yesterday visited the U.S. Consulate General in Urasoe City to protest to Consul General Kevin Maher. The consul general told them: "The incident was regrettable. Japan and the United States have been working together to create a special taskforce and a working group (to deal with the matter)."

Nagayoshi pointed out: "Behind the alleged rape incident is (U.S. military personnel's) disregard for the human rights of Okinawa people and their Occupation mentality." He handed over a note calling for an apology and full compensation to the victim, as well as revisions to the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement.

Maher also said:

"The prevention of a recurrence of crimes and revision of the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement are two separate issues. We should not be lacking in consideration for the victim by using the

incident politically."

In regard to the issue of (Okinawa's opposition to) U.S. military members' living off base, Maher told Nagayoshi: "Why do you oppose such? What are your specific reasons?" Nagayoshi responded: "Because they are foreigners." The consul general then said: "You oppose such only because they are foreigners. If that is your reason, doesn't that become racial discrimination?"

(Corrected copy): Poll: 44 PERCENT hope for DPJ victory in next general election

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
March 6, 2008

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The Mainichi Shimbun conducted a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey on Mar. 1-2, in which respondents were asked which political party between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan they would like to see win in the next election for the House of Representatives. In response, 44 PERCENT chose the DPJ, with 34 PERCENT preferring the LDP, posting almost the same results as in the last survey taken in January. "Other political parties" accounted for 15 PERCENT, up 3 percentage points. The figure is the highest ever since the survey began to ask this question in August last year. The survey this time shows that both the LDP and the DPJ remain unable to fully answer public expectations.

The same question was asked in the past seven surveys. The DPJ was above the LDP in all those surveys. In a survey taken right after the Fukuda cabinet's inauguration in September last year, the LDP stood at 41 PERCENT, with the DPJ at 45 PERCENT. In the following surveys, the LDP was down, with the gap between the two parties at 5 points, 13 points, 9 points, and 10 points.

"Other political parties" accounted for 9 PERCENT in September last year. However, the figure tends to increase along with the declining rate of support for the LDP.

Among men, the LDP stood at 31 PERCENT, with the DPJ at 54 PERCENT. Among women, the LDP scored 37 PERCENT, and the DPJ at 35 PERCENT.

Among DPJ supporters, only 2 PERCENT said they want the LDP to win. Meanwhile, among LDP supporters, the proportion of those who want the LDP to win rose to 10 PERCENT. Among those who support New Komeito, it also went up to 11 PERCENT. The figures show that the ruling parties are becoming unsteady. Among those who answered that they have no party to support, the LDP marked 23 PERCENT, with the DPJ at 40 PERCENT and other political parties at 27 PERCENT.

SCHIEFFER